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General and complete disarmament

Relationship between disarmament and development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/30. It discusses recent trends in the further strengthening within the United Nations of the relationship between disarmament and development. In addition, the report contains information received from Governments on the subject.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 66/30, entitled "Relationship between disarmament and development", the Assembly stressed the central role of the United Nations in the disarmament-development relationship and requested the Secretary-General to strengthen further the role of the Organization in this field. In paragraph 2 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to take action, through appropriate organs and within available resources, for the implementation of the action programme adopted at the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development.[1] In paragraph 7 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its sixty-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. Furthermore, in paragraph 6 of the resolution, the General Assembly reiterated its invitation to Member States to provide the Secretary-General with information regarding measures and efforts to devote part of the resources made available by the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements to economic and social development, with a view to reducing the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.

3. On 8 March 2012, the Secretariat sent a note verbale to Member States seeking their views. At the time of writing, replies have been received from the following Member States: Colombia, Cuba and Panama. This information is contained in section III below.

II. Strengthening further the role of the United Nations in the disarmament-development relationship

4. Since 1981, Member States have been providing information on their military spending through what is now called the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.[2] In 2010 and 2011, a Group of Governmental Experts met for the first time since the 1980s to review the operation of this instrument. The report of the Group (A/66/89), which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/20, contained recommendations designed to facilitate broader participation by States in this reporting instrument, and thus enhance international security through greater transparency in military expenditures.

5. In recent years, the United Nations has increasingly focused on issues pertaining to the relationship between disarmament and development in the field of conventional arms. Examples include the broad approach to the issue of small arms which the Secretary-General presented to the Security Council in 2011 (S/2011/255) and the emphasis on a comprehensive approach in assistance in mine action (e.g. A/66/292).

6. The destabilizing effect between armed violence, poor control over the trade in arms and ammunition, the traffic in illicit drugs, weak institutions, corruption and the lack of good governance is increasingly recognized. The United Nations has an

[1] See *Report of the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, New York, 24 August-11 September 1987* (A/CONF.130/39).

[2] See www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex.

important role to further address these issues and assist Member States in this regard. In discussions on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including during the session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in New York from 19 to 23 March 2012, issues such as international assistance in stockpile management and destruction, setting up systems for the marking and tracing of arms, or improving national legislation and regulatory systems figured prominently in the discussions.

7. On a daily basis, the United Nations system is confronted with the effects of the poorly regulated arms trade on development efforts. Those suffering most from the adverse effects of such arms trade are the men, women, girls and boys trapped in situations of armed violence and conflict. The human costs of the consequences of the poorly regulated global trade in conventional arms are manifested in several ways: in the killing, wounding and rape of civilians, and in the perpetration of other serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law; in the displacement of people within and across borders; and in the endurance of extreme insecurity and economic hardship by those affected by armed violence and conflict.

8. In 2006, Member States embarked on discussions on an arms trade treaty (General Assembly resolution 63/240). Many States raised issues pertaining to development as strong linkages are now seen between development, arms trade and conflicts.

9. Within the United Nations, the main coordination mechanisms on these issues remain the United Nations Mine Action Team, the Coordinating Action on Small Arms and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. These mechanisms ensure that the United Nations — in accordance with the action programme of the final document of the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development — continues to promote an interrelated perspective within the overall objective of promoting international peace and security.

III. Information received from Governments

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[4 June 2012]

It is a priority of Colombia's foreign and domestic policy to promote development. Accordingly, from a national standpoint and in its relations with the international community, Colombia is working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

As part of its democratic prosperity policy, the Government allocates considerable resources to meet the challenges set out in resolution 66/30, in the areas of development, the eradication of poverty and the elimination of the diseases that afflict humanity.

In addition, Colombia is committed on principle to disarmament, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and control of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, munitions and ordnance.

In line with the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the relationship between disarmament and development, Colombia advocates increasing awareness in the international community of the relationship between the two concepts, and adopting a broad range of measures to prevent conflicts, in particular, measures relating to illicit small arms and light weapons; the promotion of security through greater transparency and confidence; and a greater part to be played in so doing by the United Nations, other international institutions and the donor community.

Security is a basic element of any development policy. Colombia is firmly convinced that disarmament and a reduction of illicit trade in all types of weapons, munitions and ordnance contributes to security and, thereby, to development. As indicated in paragraph 14 of the Final Document of the 1987 International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development, the enhancement of security has not only military but also political, economic, social, humanitarian and human rights and ecological aspects.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[6 June 2012]

The global nature of the present economic and financial crisis is making the relationship between disarmament and development all the more relevant.

It is counterproductive that global military spending has grown by about 45 per cent in the last decade, while the troubles caused by economic and social underdevelopment, privation and poverty have become more acute.

The alarming acceleration of the arms race, which now accounts for 1.74 trillion dollars annually, is taking up much too large a proportion of the human, financial, natural and technological resources of the world and placing a heavy burden on the economies of many countries.

The armed forces are major consumers of a broad range of non-renewable resources and reserves, both of energy and of raw materials. The major military Powers are primarily responsible for the consumption of raw materials for military purposes, even beyond their consumption of resources in general.

Military and related activities absorb a large proportion of the scientific and technological potential. It is estimated that, currently, about 25 per cent of the world's scientists are engaged in military-related activities. Of the total research and development spending since the Second World War, about 40 per cent has been used for military purposes.

Since 1960, rich countries have spent no less than 15 trillion dollars on the manufacture of weapons (approximately 334 billion dollars annually); yet they have allocated only 2.6 trillion dollars (less than 58 billion dollars annually) to development assistance to poor countries. In other words, rich countries have

invested at least six times more in manufacturing weapons than they have spent in development assistance.

The United Nations has calculated that 80 billion dollars a year for one decade would be enough to do away with poverty, hunger, and the lack of health care, education and housing on the entire planet. However, what is spent for weapons is 100 times greater than what is spent to alleviate hunger, promote agricultural development and ease the economic predicament in which most countries find themselves.

Cuba reiterates its proposal to establish a fund, administered by the United Nations, to which would be allocated at least half of current military expenditure would be paid in order to meet the economic and social development requirements of countries in need. This initiative, apart from its obvious benefits, could have added value as a confidence-building measure and would be a decisive factor in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Cuba also reiterates its support for the action programme adopted at the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, held in September 1987, which includes an international commitment to allocate a portion of the resources made available through disarmament for purposes of socioeconomic development. Cuba likewise supports the discussion of this matter in the General Assembly. It falls to the United Nations to play a central role in linking disarmament to development.

States must take specific steps to devote part of the resources made available by the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements to economic and social development, with a view to reducing the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[7 May 2012]

We wish to state, as we have already done on previous occasions, that by constitutional mandate Panama does not have any armed forces, and that therefore it is not possible to respond to the requests referred to in paragraphs 6 and 7 of [resolution 66/30].